

MINUTES OF THE
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
REGIONAL COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

October 31, 2001
MAG Office - **Mesquite** Room
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Mayor Keno Hawker, Mesa, Chair
Mayor Elaine Scruggs, Vice Chair, Glendale
Mayor Ron Drake, Avondale
Mayor Bill Arnold, Goodyear

Supervisor Jan Brewer, Maricopa County
*Councilmember Peggy Bilsten, Phoenix
Roc Arnett, State Transportation Board

*Those members not present.

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Regional Council Transportation Subcommittee was called to order by Chairman Keno Hawker at 10:00 a.m.

2. Approval of September 12, 2001 Meeting Minutes

Mayor Ron Drake moved to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2001 meeting. Mr. Roc Arnett seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Update on Phase One of the MAG Regional Transportation Plan

Eric Anderson stated that a Regional Transportation Plan Advisors meeting was held October 30, 2001. He stated that there has been discussion of the development of the goals and values. Feedback indicated that the objectives need to be determined before the goals and values can be reviewed. Mr. Anderson stated that a sense of what the region will look like in 50 years is needed. He explained that previously, a 20-year planning horizon was used, but it was deemed that using a 50-year horizon was better because there is a lot of planned development in the region. Mr. Anderson stated that they focused on two aspects, population and how that population might be distributed. He noted that a population projection of 8.5 million was used. This differed from the DES projection of 7.3 million, which DES is updating. Mr. Anderson stated that 8.5 million assumes 20 percent less growth per decade for the next five decades. He added that a projected increase of one million in Pinal County was also considered because they have planned development of 185,000 housing units, which could impact this region's transportation system. Mr. Anderson explained that MAG has been reviewing cities' General Plan updates. General Plans give general parameters of how a city will develop, but do not take into consideration the rate and density.

Mr. Anderson explained maps using four draft scenarios for 2050 based on draft plans. He stated that the first map showed development trends remaining the same. The second map showed an infill development emphasis. Mr. Arnett asked if Pinal County was included in the second map. Mr. Anderson replied that the consultants are working on including them.

Mayor Elaine Scruggs asked about a 90 percent density area that was separate from the other areas of the same density. Mr. Anderson explained that was Buckeye in 2050.

Mr. Anderson stated that the third map was the activity center concept. He explained how intense development is projected along I-17, I-10 to the west, the Superstition, and around Loop 101. Dennis Smith stated that a powerpoint is available and could be sent for further information.

Mr. Anderson showed the fourth map based on employment. He noted that the dark blue referred to 110 percent target buildout activity. Mayor Scruggs commented that could cause transportation problems. She stated that the answer to balancing too much job density is not to replace it with more housing.

Mr. Anderson stated that as Phase I is wrapped up, pieces of all four scenarios may be incorporated. He explained that the buildout west of the White Tanks could be equivalent to the current City of Phoenix population. Mr. Anderson stated that this will present a great transportation challenge, because the grid arterial system cannot be extended through the White Tanks, and residents will have to use Sun Valley Parkway, Grand Avenue, or I-10. Mayor Ron Drake noted that this will be a major planning challenge.

Mr. Smith explained that on the next TRC agenda, a private road from the Caterpillar site east of the White Tanks will connect an interchange with I-10. He added that the 208 amendment has been approved. Mr. Smith stated that there has been discussion that plans are approved in pieces and not as a whole. The process that MAG will be attempting will bring all of the pieces together and framed so the committees will know what they will get when they vote. Development will be shown before the pieces are approved. Mayor Scruggs stated that there was no staff comment on the impact to transportation when the Russell Ranch approval was heard.

Mr. Arnett asked about including data in the map from Mesa's Master Plan since their plan will not be complete for another six months. Mr. Anderson replied that the additional data may change the map somewhat, but the data that is available identifies major activity centers.

Mayor Drake stated that cities have identified their planned development and there could be problems with not moving forward. He commented on working with GPEC and the State to make it happen.

Chairman Hawker asked what would be MAG's transportation planning process to integrate land use planning with the ideal transportation system? Mr. Anderson replied that the maps reflect the current thinking of the cities. If areas are built out, there will be very intense development. Mr. Anderson stated that if this is what the cities say they want according to their general plans, then a transportation system needs to be designed that will meet the needs of the community. Chairman Hawker asked about balancing the intensity. Mr. Anderson stated that balance would be achieved with open space. Chairman Hawker asked why the concentration of six million people in the urban area was being considered. Mr. Anderson replied that this was probably not feasible. He added that new freeways through the core are not being considered. Mr. Anderson stated that express bus and fixed guideway systems would be needed. Mr. Smith noted that the maps had not yet been finalized. He commented that the wishes of the cities were being considered.

Mayor Scruggs noted that the 101 in Glendale is not considered residential. Mr. Anderson stated that this was reflected in the map and that is the type of use that the consultants are considering. He stated that the scenario was not concerned with any certain zone, but rather the overall distribution of

growth. It is important to make sure that people are not put where cities do not plan for them. Mr. Anderson stated that housing and population density maps still to be drafted will reflect the different types of information available.

Mr. Arnett referred to the red density to the west and asked if this was similarly projected toward the Pinal County area? He stated that he wanted to ensure coordination so that this growth would be accommodated. Mr. Anderson explained that a joint study with CAAG will examine growth in the Pinal County area. He stated that Yavapai topography lends a less dense development and could be handled more simply.

Mayor Scruggs asked if Pinal County was showing the same level of concern for impacts to the MAG region from their development, as MAG is showing? Mr. Anderson commented that MAG does not want to be perceived as planning for Pinal County. The Pinal County level of transportation planning is not at the level of detail that MAG is conducting. Mr. Anderson stated that Pinal County relies on the State Highways. They do not have a highly defined arterial system. Mr. Smith stated that Pinal County recently updated their transportation plan, but not in the same detail as MAG's update.

Mayor Scruggs asked if the same level of concern was being given to Maricopa County residents as Pinal County impacts? Mr. Anderson replied that more time is being spent on west area issues because they are in the MAG region. He stated that how Pinal County impacts the MAG region is a top priority, because moving people in the MAG region is important.

Chairman Hawker stated that if there is awareness that an area is going to develop, those corridors should be set aside now. He commented on moving away from state routes as arterials, which clog the system.

Mayor Arnold asked which is the biggest area in Pinal County that will affect transportation in the next five years? Mr. Anderson replied that would probably be Johnson Ranch, near Queen Creek. Mr. Arnett stated that it is not MAG's job to plan in Pinal County, but to be concerned with what happens there and the impact to Maricopa County.

Mayor Scruggs expressed concern with funding requests that may result. She asked what Pinal County was doing to help? Mr. Anderson replied that the Southeast Study will help open their eyes. Mayor Scruggs stated that there are far reaching implications that need to be considered. Mr. Smith explained that this is one of the reasons that the Transportation Subcommittee was formed—increased awareness of the elected officials.

Mr. Arnett commented on possible coordination with the State Board. He stated that Pinal County has made requests that use US 60 as an arterial. Mayor Scruggs asked if they impose impact fees? Mr. Arnett replied that there are applicable impact fees for facilities other than roads. Chuck Eaton stated that the pressure will be on the state to put in interchanges.

Chairman Hawker stated that Mesa is interested in a Hawes Road interchange that will serve as a major entry point to Williams Gateway Airport and could also be the connection point tying the Santan Freeway to a road to Pinal County. He asked if there were further questions on this agenda item.

4. Update on Regional Transportation Studies

Roger Herzog provided an overview of the subarea studies being conducted as a part of the Regional Transportation Plan. He provided a handout listing the studies underway. Mr. Herzog stated that purpose of conducting the East/West Mobility Study is to improve traffic capacity without constructing new roadways. The Northwest, Southwest and Southeast Area Studies will identify regional elements of the transportation system to meet future travel demand. Mr. Herzog stated that the Northwest Grand Corridor Study will identify a facility concept and future improvements. He added that MAG staff will be getting key jurisdictions together to get input on an ultimate concept for Grand Avenue.

Mayor Scruggs asked if there had been community input. Mr. Herzog replied that agency and public forums have been held. Supervisor Jan Brewer asked if the improvement area was Loop 101 to Loop 303. Mr. Herzog answered that the current study is from Loop 101 to Loop 303, but the agency input was being sought on the entire length of Grand Avenue. Mayor Scruggs asked if there was an improved process over the last study. Mr. Herzog replied that there is more determination during this study to arrive at a final consensus on Grand Avenue. Mr. Smith noted that Grand Avenue is still classified as a freeway in the long range plan. This classification impacts other studies. Mr. Smith explained that a determination of whether Grand Avenue will be a freeway needs to be made so other quality studies for the West Valley can be conducted.

Chairman Hawker commented on preventive measures being used with the Rittenhouse site in Queen Creek to avoid another Grand Avenue-type of facility.

Mayor Arnold asked if the Paradise Parkway would be needed again. Mr. Smith replied that he was not sure whether we wanted to go through the Paradise Parkway Plan again. Improving east/west arterials may be desirable. He acknowledged that wider arterials would be needed, however. Mayor Arnold asked if Grand Avenue as a freeway would be less expensive. Mr. Anderson explained that if Grand Avenue were to become a freeway, there would be major access control issues, because of existing businesses, etc. Mayor Arnold asked if a designation would be made within two years. Mr. Anderson replied that is the goal, and to ensure that a proper designation is made. He also explained that an additional lane on I-17 being carried on the plans, which would be difficult to build. Mr. Anderson stated that the Bottleneck Study will look at increasing capacity on existing facilities.

Mayor Scruggs stated that with a 20-mile span from I-10 to Loop 101, an east/west connector needs to be determined. She stated that there are problems because many streets are not through streets, they go through different jurisdictions, and there are homes and institutions already there. Mayor Scruggs mentioned that the City of Glendale has added their own money for a connector along Northern Avenue from 67th Avenue to Loop 303, subject to approval by the voters. Mr. Smith noted comments given by Bay area and Los Angeles attendees at the IPG Conference. They indicated that congestion in some instances may be considered a good thing, because it means there is business activity.

Mr. Herzog stated that the Bottleneck Study will identify capacity improvements on existing roadways. In addition, a Commuter Rail/High Capacity Transit Study will study feasibility of these modes, and RPTA is conducting a Regional Transit System Study. Mr. Smith noted that approval of the consultant for the Commuter Rail/High Capacity Transit Study is on the November 7th Regional Council agenda. If the region continues to grow, bus rapid transit and commuter rail options need to be decided. Mr. Smith explained that there is some concern about conflict with the light rail system.

He stated that this should not be perceived as a threat, because light rail generally serves a denser area, and commuter and bus rapid transit services outlying areas. Ken Driggs stated that as many options as can be concurrently studied are needed. He stated that bus rapid transit is a major component. Transportation is at the same point it was in the 1980's. This is the next generation of decisions that must be made for the next 20 years. Mr. Driggs stated that he did not see commuter rail as competition for light rail. A single mode of development is not warranted, because one is for dense development, and the other is not. Mr. Driggs stated that difficult times are ahead to determine priorities, but the right decisions will be made.

Mr. Arnett asked if all of the studies could be completed at the same time, perhaps July. He stated that time is getting short to have everything completed for the sales tax election. Mr. Anderson stated that critical elements could be completed sooner. He added that there is only a certain volume that can be accomplished by staff and the consultants. Mr. Anderson commented on some issues that have arisen with consultant quality control. Mr. Arnett asked if the Northwest Area Study and the Northwest Grand Avenue Corridor Study were similar and if the area being studied was projected far enough out? Mr. Anderson explained that the Grand Avenue Study is almost complete. Where that study ends at the 303, the Northwest Area Study picks up.

Mayor Scruggs commended MAG for demanding quality work from the consultants in order that the work meets the test. Mr. Anderson replied that a quality controlled process does slow down the process somewhat, but needs to be done. Chairman Hawker acknowledged that he has experienced similar consultant issues. He asked why a Northeast Valley Study was not being undertaken. Mr. Anderson explained that the area was asked three times if they wanted a study done. He indicated that there may be concerns for Loop 303 continuing around their area. Mr. Smith stated that they are updating their street plan. Mayor Scruggs noted how Scottsdale is sensitive to development in their open space preserve. She mentioned that Mayor Mary Manross had made this very clear during discussion at a Regional Council meeting of the 303/I-17 connector.

5. Listing of Projects Submitted for Funding Consideration for FY 2007 from MAG Federal STP and CMAQ Funds

Paul Ward stated that the attachment sent with the agenda packet included modal committee rankings for CMAQ and STP funded projects. He explained that the projects were ranked through the congestion management system and emissions reduction process. Mr. Ward noted that the lower the CMAQ score, the more beneficial the project would be to air quality.

Supervisor Brewer noted that some projects did not have scores. Mr. Ward explained that the two rating systems used were not able to give scores to all projects submitted. Specifically, emission reductions were not needed for STP targeted projects and it was not possible to obtain either congestion management system scores nor emission reductions for areawide or non geographically defined projects. Mr. Ward reported that the methodology for both rating systems was constantly under review to make them both more applicable to the projects in question.

Mayor Scruggs asked for clarification of the scoring system. Mr. Ward explained the ranking process by the Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee, the Bicycle Committee, ITS Committee, Pedestrian Committee and Street Committee. Mr. Ward pointed out that some transit projects are submitted for CMAQ funds, and others for 5307 funds. Mr. Smith stated that Phoenix, as the designated recipient, receives and distributes 5307 funds.

Mr. Arnett asked how these projects interact with the statewide program. Mr. Smith stated the funds are suballocated through the Department of Transportation. The MAG region receives approximately \$75 million per year, in addition to ADOT funds. Mr. Anderson stated that there are four pots of money: CMAQ, STP, 5307 and 5309. Mr. Smith noted that the rankings are completed and then sent for TRC review. Then revisions go back to the committees. He explained the federal concern that MAG follows the rating process. Mr. Smith stated that revisions were made to the rating system. Mr. Anderson stated that scores are considered to be a part of the ranking process. There was concern that the scores were not being considered highly enough, and that the projects that were more air quality effective were not being ranked high enough.

Ken Driggs commented that in defense of certain modes, for the past 10 years, up to 80 percent of funding was earmarked for the freeway system. Mr. Smith explained that MAG gets \$75 million suballocated each year, of which \$30 to \$35 million is STP flexible money. He stated that as a result of the freeway program funding, the Regional Council wanted to complete the freeway program, so they allocated STP funds to the freeway program. This put pressure on funding for local projects. Usually, transit would have had greater access to approximately \$30 million per year.

Supervisor Brewer commented that \$11 million for the Gilbert Road project seemed high. Mr. Ward explained that project was submitted by Maricopa County and three other agencies, ADOT, Mesa, and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. He mentioned that the price may seem high because it includes a roadway five to six miles long and a low flow crossing.

Mr. Ward further explained that about half of the 2007 suballocated funds goes toward the completion of the regional freeway system, which leaves only about \$3 million for STP local projects. He stated that CMAQ projects are programmed for only the Obligation Authority that is expected. Mr. Ward mentioned that the TRC will divide the funding among the individual modes.

Chairman Hawker asked the composition of the TRC. Mr. Anderson replied that Fred Carpenter, Wickenburg Town Manager, is the Chair. Membership numbers approximately 20 and includes a mix of member agency transportation professionals and intergovernmental liaisons. Mr. Anderson noted that appointments to the committee are made by the Regional Council Chair, after recommendation by the cities. Mayor Scruggs mentioned that TRC recommendations go to the Management Committee, then to the Regional Council.

Mr. Smith stated that at Governance Task Force meetings, adding other interests, such as freight and aviation, has been discussed. Their role could change to making recommendations to the Regional Council, giving the Transportation Subcommittee a greater role in the process. Chairman Hawker noted that whatever model is chosen, the Transportation Subcommittee will be expanded to include other interests and have a larger role. Mayor Scruggs noted that it is important to be at the lower levels where the issues start.

Mr. Ward stated that the TRC sends the lists back to the modal technical committees in November, then the final draft lists will be considered by the TRC on December 11, 2001. Their recommendation will be considered by the Management Committee and Regional Council in January. Chairman Hawker thanked Mr. Ward for his report.

6. Proposal for Accelerations of State Route 85 and the Interim Wickenburg Bypass

Chuck Eaton, ADOT staff, provided an update on the acceleration of two transportation projects in this region, State Route 85 to a four-lane divided highway, and the Interim Wickenburg Bypass. He stated that these two projects are of high importance to the State Transportation Board. Mr. Eaton explained that SIBs and Garvee Bonds (GANS) have provided an opportunity to accelerate the projects.

Mr. Arnett stated that the State Board discussed the accelerations extensively. Because there is concern for allotments to the rural parts of the State, it was shown that this was a rural project, and nothing was being taken away from urban allotments. Mr. Arnett added that this is not a guarantee that the projects will be done. He stated that it is prudent not lock in final commitments because of current economic issues. Mr. Arnett stated that the goal is have this resolved by January.

Mr. Eaton stated that \$20 million has been set aside for the Wickenburg Bypass. The project will eventually cost \$20 to \$27 million. Mr. Smith explained how this funding differs from the \$75 million that MAG receives in CMAQ and STP funds.

Mr. Eaton displayed a map of the Wickenburg Bypass area, showing Route 60 into Wickenburg. He stated that the interim route crosses a new bridge and bypasses downtown, then connects to US 93. Mr. Eaton stated that the State and the Town prefer this alignment. He noted that public hearings have not yet been held. After a consensus is reached, a recommendation will be made. Mr. Eaton pointed out a hazardous waste site as an area of concern. He mentioned that the bypass would need to go around this site.

Chairman Hawker asked how long the interim bypass would be used until the final bypass would be constructed. Mr. Eaton replied that the interim would be used until the final bypass was programmed and constructed but there was no program date identified.

Mr. Arnett mentioned a route he suggested about three years ago, from the Canamex route out I-10 to Sun Valley Parkway, connect outside of Wickenburg, then connect to US 93 west. He stated that this route would cost \$250 million. Mr. Arnett stated that the consensus of the core city group is that it would be hard to fund until Canamex funding comes along. Their support is important to build the interim bypass. Mr. Arnett mentioned that he thought the project cost would be \$13 million. Mr. Eaton replied that was not the final figure.

Mayor Scruggs asked whether it would be preferential to build all the way past the downtown? She mentioned that businesses will build along the interim bypass. Mr. Arnett stated that the recommendation for the Wickenburg Bypass could be couched with language that MAG supports the bypass that is ultimately selected.

Mayor Scruggs stated that if the bypass goes through, another Grand Avenue could be created. Mr. Arnett stated that the Town is divided on this.

Chairman Hawker noted that all want to see the Canamex corridor completed. He asked why it would take 15 years? Mr. Arnett stated that SR 85 and the interim Wickenburg Bypass need to be done first. He stated that it will be ten years before the Canamex is started because of no funding. Mr. Smith noted that SR 85 is presently being used as a bypass, and not a safe one.

Mr. Eaton displayed a map of the proposed SR 85 project. He said that projects have been programmed annually for the past few years. Given the accidents and truck traffic, there is great interest to accelerate the improvements. The overall plan is to build a four-lane divided highway from I-10 to Gila Bend. The total cost estimate is \$137 million. Mr. Eaton noted that about \$73 million has already been programmed. The acceleration would result in programming the balance of the project and would involve issuing GANS. Mr. Eaton stated that about \$16.1 million per year for the period 2007 to 2040 would have to be committed.

Chairman Hawker asked why funding was not included in the ½ cent sales tax. Mr. Anderson stated that the final project was scheduled to go to contract in 2005. Mr. Arnett stated the plan was to accelerate and use those funds, then the funds from the ½ cent sales tax can be used for other projects. Mr. Anderson stated that it could be bonded when the extension passes.

7. Proposed Swap of Funding for South Mountain Parkway and the Santan Freeway

Mr. Eaton stated that ADOT is proposing to swap a portion of the funding for the South Mountain Parkway with a segment of the Santan Freeway. He stated that \$85 million has been set aside for the South Mountain Corridor. Mr. Eaton stated that before anything is done on the South Mountain Corridor, an Environmental Impact Statement, which will take approximately three years, is needed in order to qualify for federal funding. Mr. Eaton stated this provides a better chance the Parkway will be built. Mr. Eaton stated that the area around the Santan is developing quickly. He stated that it is better to acquire right-of-way earlier than later, because of the rising costs. Mr. Eaton stated that \$18 million has been set aside for right-of-way acquisition in 2002 for the South Mountain Corridor. He added that ADOT is recommending that \$16 million be moved to the Gilbert to Higley section of the Santan. The money would be transferred back in 2003 and 2004. Mr. Eaton stated that this item will be on the next Regional Council agenda.

Mayor Drake asked about the connection of the South Mountain Corridor to I-10 between Loop 101 and 59th Avenue. Mr. Eaton stated that federal regulations require alternatives be examined. He added that ADOT has a contract with HDR Engineering to do the EIS. Mayor Drake asked if the economic impact on the freeway at 59th Avenue versus a connection to Loop 101 would be addressed. Mr. Eaton stated that this will be a consideration. Mr. Arnett noted that the alignment is located where the City of Phoenix wants it. He expressed that he felt the alignment should connect to Loop 101. Mr. Arnett stated that if the public comes out en masse, the alignment can be moved.

Mr. Smith stated that MAG studied alternatives prior to 1989. If federal funds are needed for a project, then an EIS can be done and alternatives considered. Mayor Scruggs stated that the alignment decision was based on data from another time. There could be a better alternative.

There being no further business Chairman Hawker asked for a motion to adjourn. Mayor Scruggs moved, Mayor Drake seconded and the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary